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THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

CHURCH EFFICIENCY

The Country Church

A recent survey of rural churches by the Presbyterian Department of Church and Country Life is discussed in the *Congregationalist* by Bruce Barton. The survey relates to twelve counties lying in four states—Missouri, Ohio, Indiana, and Tennessee. In the twelve counties there are 760 churches. There are relatively few foreign-born inhabitants in the whole territory. The counties are in every respect American, typical of the best of our rural life. The schools are reasonably good. The telephone and rural mail have reached out over all sections. It is all prohibition territory. There is practically no loafing or vagrancy. Of the homes, 85 per cent are owned by those who live in them. There is no hostility to the church. The whole population, with a few exceptions, regard the church as a wholesome moral influence, deserving far more support than it gets.

On the background of these facts, the Presbyterian report shows a rather discouraging condition. There is no emotionalism in the figures; no attempt to bolster up a theory or create a panic. They are scientific results, gathered so coldly that there is agitation in certain quarters of the Presbyterian church for abolition of the department. As to figures, the total membership of all churches in the twelve counties is 29 per cent of the population. One-fifth of the churches are dead. Half of them are dying.

As to constructive suggestions: In no single instance where a church receives the services of a minister for whole time or even half time is it failing to show at least some progress. Districts large enough and wealthy enough to pay well for the services

of one high-grade resident pastor are contributing driblets to the maintenance of four or five preachers who live miles away in comfortable villages and are utterly without contact with the daily lives and problems and interests of their people. The members, instead of developing a vigorous loyalty to a particular church, have formed the habit of visiting around at all and hence have developed no feeling of real responsibility for any. Many useless churches are fighting a losing battle where one strong church might win.

Efficiency Experts for Local Churches

The individual church should employ efficiency men upon the same principle that an industrial establishment does, writes Mr. Edward S. Ralston in a suggestive article recently issued in *The Christian Work and Evangelist*. This is the age of the specialist and expert. Men who have created great industrial and commercial enterprises are learning that there are men able to tell them a great deal about certain phases of their business; men with a peculiar genius for certain phases of analytic and synthetic criticism of methods and organizations. These efficiency experts may not have executive ability to carry on the business, but they are able to suggest changes that will save time, labor, and power, securing economy in administration, preventing waste, and producing increased results. The man who employs the expert knows more about the business; but the expert knows more about the system.

Why not try something like this in the local churches? Are there not men possessed of this genius for critical planning, who could prepare a constructive program

for a church? The church could invite such a man to visit it, study its field, membership, and methods, and recommend a plan for its work. Do you, officers and members of a church, resent the idea that anybody could tell you how to do your work? If a man conducting a business which is his own is willing to be advised, ought not you, members of Christ's church, whose business is not your own but the King's, to seek advice and help from every source? Are you perhaps lamenting the lethargy or decadence of your church and its waning power in the community? You have lost your grip on the young people. Why? Your church has no influence with the men in the shops and factories. Why? Even the men whose fathers were pillars of your church are indifferent or alienated. Why? Does your church have any influence or authority in the social, industrial, and political life of your town? What are you doing to remedy the situation? Do you know what to do? The gospel has lost none of its power for salvation. Churches are human organizations for the transmission of that power. If there is failure, is it not due to some wrong adjustment of the human machinery?

The expert would study the working force, the entire membership and machinery of the church. He would secure through the work of church members a complete survey of the community. This would include, as far as possible, the life-history, religious, industrial, financial, and social, of every individual and family. This is done by the political leaders and is surely not impossible for a church. On the basis of this survey, every member, able in body and mind, should be assigned to some active service for the kingdom. Fitness, and not the choice of the individual, must determine the service. Does this seem impossible for a church, that all the members should be at work and all at the work they can best do? What the captains of industry can do for

commercial success, the church of Christ can do for the success of his kingdom.

Where can such experts be found? As the need is recognized, men will arise to meet it. There are, in every section of the country, men who are applying these methods to their own affairs, who are devoted to the church, who recognize its need for greater efficiency, and who, if invited, would willingly aid in framing a constructive church program.

Church Advertising

Under the title "The Why and How of Church Advertising," Charles Stelzle writes very suggestively in a recent issue of *The Continent*. The whole proposition of church advertising, he says, should be dealt with in the biggest kind of fashion. It should make a man feel that here is an appeal which has in it nothing of the narrow sectarian spirit so frequently associated with religion. It would pay all the churches in a town to engage in an advertising propaganda on general lines, just as they sometimes go into an evangelistic campaign. Such a union advertising campaign would win the respect of the community. It would also permit the churches to engage in a more extensive scheme of publicity than would otherwise be possible, and each church would unquestionably get more out of it than if the same amount of advertising had been distributed in individual campaigns.

The right kind of advertising should break down the prejudice of the public concerning those matters which are little understood by the mass of the people outside the church. Few outside the church have the proper conception of the doctrines which are actually taught by the church today. Terms of admission should be made very plain. To most men the supposed barriers to church membership appear almost insurmountable. They fear catechizing and humiliation. These and other matters may be made the subjects of a series of

advertisements either in personal letters or in the newspapers.

It is important that an advertisement should be so disposed that it may be easily and quickly read. The minister often fails in preparation of advertising because he adopts the same method of approach as he does when getting out sermons. In writing a sermon, a minister begins with a more or less elaborate introduction, placing his climax at the end. The expert advertising man writes his climax first, and puts it into the headline. Under ordinary circumstances, there are four features to be presented in the advertisement—the place, the speaker, the subject, the time. Which of these should be given the headline? If the meeting is to be in a well-known and popular auditorium, this fact alone may be of sufficient importance to give it first place. If the speaker is a man of great reputation, his name should be played up first. If the meeting is to be held in a church, and the speaker is without notable drawing power,

the subject itself should be given first place. The time of meeting should never be placed at the top of the announcement. Give to the headline the feature having the biggest "pulling" power.

The church is usually too impatient of results. It wants accessions to its membership at once. But the same laws of psychology which apply to business life also apply to the church. To illustrate, one need think simply of pickles, and immediately a very familiar brand flashes before one's mind. And to think of soap suggests one or two well-known names of manufacturers who have long been advertising and creating an atmosphere favorable to their goods. The church, too, must be willing to spend time in creating an atmosphere. And just as the general advertising of the manufacturer is supplemented by that of the local dealer, so the union advertising of the churches must be supplemented by advertising which is issued by the individual church.